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NEWS RELEASE

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Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced today the issuance of a criminal complaint and arrest warrants for Constance Occident, 45, of Olney, Maryland, and Beurn Ferdinand, 34, of Brooklyn, New York. The complaint charges the defendants with conspiring to commit identity theft and violations of the medical information privacy provisions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.

Defendant Occident was arrested today by agents of the United States Secret Service, who also executed search warrants at the residences of both defendants and the home of a third potential co-conspirator. Defendant Ferdinand remains a fugitive. If convicted the defendants face up to five years imprisonment.

Occident was a Care Team Assistant in the Intermediate Care Unit ("IMCU") at INOVA Alexandria Hospital, in Alexandria, Virginia. She and Ferdinand, an acquaintance living in Brooklyn, are accused of working together, from about January 2004 through July 2005, to steal the identifying information of 35 hospital patients and use it to open fraudulent credit card accounts. The complaint charges that Occident used her position in the hospital to steal patients' medical documentation, copy identifying information, and convey it to Ferdinand or use it herself. Of the 35 patient-victims identified so far, 10 of them were 85 or older; 29 of them were 65 or older; and about eight of them are recently deceased. In addition, Occident is alleged to have stolen identifying information belonging to seven IMCU nurses, which also was used to open additional fraudulent accounts.

Occident and Ferdinand allegedly used these fraudulent accounts to buy jewelry, clothes and other merchandise. Ferdinand is also accused of using the fraudulent cards to pay parking fines and automobile insurance for her car. Total losses are approximately \$200,000.

United States Attorney Paul J. McNulty said, "These defendants took advantage of the most vulnerable people imaginable – elderly, seriously ill patients. This case is another warning to identity thieves: you will be caught and punished."

The case was investigated by the United States Secret Service and the Alexandria Police Department. Assistant United States Attorneys Andrew E. Lelling and Special Assistant United States Attorney Lou Ruffino are prosecuting the case.

(It should be noted that defendants are innocent until proven guilty.)